

MARRICKVILLE HERITAGE SOCIETY INC.

DULWICH HILL ENMORE LEWISHAM
ST PETERS SYDENHAM TEMPE



MARRICKVILLE PETERSHAM STANMORE
& PARTS OF CAMPERDOWN & NEWTOWN



Members of MHS & Ryde DHS at 'Addington', an early farmhouse in Ryde area, May 2005 (photo: Richard Blair)

OUR NEXT MEETING
Saturday 25 February 2006
Richard White on *Australians on Holiday*

Another local school is closing because of falling enrolments. St Thomas Becket Primary School in Lewisham has operated since 1880, but in the past 20 years, enrolments have decreased by over 80%.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Michael Smee (rejoined), Camperdown; Minnie Bui Jones, Christine Hay, Gail & David May, David Sampson (rejoined), Bruce Woodhouse, all of Marrickville; Anne Davey, Bob Parkinson, both of Newtown; Peter Chessell, Petersham; Vivien & Cliff Wherry, Tempe; Elizabeth Bouhabib, Liverpool.

The President Lorraine Beach and members of the executive committee wish all Marrickville Heritage Society members and their families a **Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year.**

SYDNEY BUS MUSEUM SAVED BUT SOME ISSUES UNRESOLVED!

NSW Minister for Transport John Watkins announced in early November that the Sydney Bus Museum would continue to operate at its current location in Tempe 'under the terms of its current lease'. The Minister said "the old Tempe bus depot would be subdivided into three separate parcels, one of which would be retained in public hands to ensure a home for the Museum. **The Museum does an incredible job, working to preserve our transport heritage for generations to come – the least we can do is give it a home.**"

This good news follows a concerted campaign by the Museum, the community – including MHS – and some politicians. The recent campaign follows an earlier fight in 1994 against relocating the depot. **However there are still some unresolved issues.** One is whether the Museum will still have sufficient room for double decker buses to manoeuvre in access to and from Gannon Street. Will the office buildings at the front (part still used by the RTA) be retained? Will the recently-restored war memorial need to be relocated and if so, to where? What of the tramways tablet affixed to the brick buildings? Is the phrase 'under the terms of the current lease' likely to constitute another fight to remain once the lease expires?

Pot Luck Xmas Dinner report & raffle results
will appear in February newsletter

WHAT'S IN A (HOUSE) NAME?

It is not uncommon for the name of an estate or grand house to be adopted as the suburb name, such as Annandale, Enmore, Newtown. House or estate names generally reveal something about the original owners – often their place of origin.

The late **Dorothy Gaston** was a MHS member, who lived at 4 Porter Avenue from the 1920s until her death in 2001. Her forebears were pioneers of the district. I once asked Dorothy why her house was called *Erakor*. She said it derived from an island in Vanuatu where her parents had honeymooned early in the 20th century. This is hard to beat for sheer romanticism.

John Edwards had long been intrigued by the name of a block of flats with Dutch gables on the corner of Keith Street and Canonbury Grove Dulwich Hill called *Noorebar*. Finally he researched it and “found out that there was a Dutch merchant ship called *Noorebar* which used to trade along the east coast of Australia about 1920. It was sold to Fijian & then Indonesian companies and by the late 1930s was in New Guinea waters. It's thought that it was sunk by the Japanese in World War II.”

Noorebar flats
(photo from mobile
phone: Gareth Edwards)



“Now comes the strange bit. The only other thing named after it (according to Google) is Noorebar Avenue in Griffith, NSW. I'm wondering why someone named a block of flats in Dulwich Hill and an avenue in Griffith after this rather obscure Dutch vessel! It must have been important to some people, but why?”

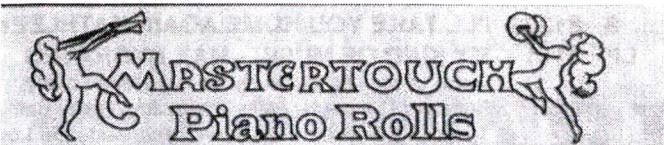
Jean Moncur was another MHS member, also from a pioneering family. After she died, the new owners honoured Jean by renaming her Moncur Street Marrickville house simply *Jean*. In February 2002 we showed a photo of a Railway Avenue Stanmore house name with a sense of humour – *St Anmore*. For humorous house names, however, this one in Addison Road Marrickville is hard to beat: *Wherearewe* (photo: Diane McCarthy).

Tell us of any stories of weird, wonderful and curious local house names.

Richard Blair



THE END OF MASTERTOUC



2005 has been a sad time for Barclay Wright, owner of the Mastertouch Piano Roll Company (formed in 1919) since the early 1960s. Barclay has spent most of his working life associated with the iconic Mastertouch, saving it from certain oblivion, when public interest in piano rolls had almost ceased to exist. As the business continued, so did the Mastertouch collection grow and with the move to the old fire station in the late 1990s, Barclay's long held dream of establishing a working museum seemed more feasible. The building was revamped and an evocative theatrette was constructed mainly by voluntary labour. The point was reached this year, where due to the business continually running at a loss, coupled with Barclay's advancing years, he had no alternative other than to close the business and sell the old fire station. Production at Mastertouch ceased on 30 June (see July 2005 newsletter) and the building has just been sold.

It is also a sad time for Marrickville LGA, given that Mastertouch has been in the area for 30 years, first in Crystal Street and then in Stanmore Road Petersham. Did the local community give enough support? Hard to say, but most voluntary assistance came from state-wide piano roll enthusiasts.

Surpassing all this sorrow, however, is the breaking-up of the Mastertouch Collection as an entity. One cannot help thinking that had this been some significant collection of sporting memorabilia, governments or philanthropists would have intervened to prevent this from happening. Unfortunately there appears to be little intrinsic regard for this type of musical paraphernalia, regardless of its age, value and rarity.

As indicated in our September 2004 and July 2005 newsletters, the penultimate, well-qualified board of Mastertouch was moving towards preserving the collection, but, in the end, this board did not have the support of Barclay Wright and his supporters.

Unsuccessful efforts by the new board to obtain private sector or government funding, as well as inadequate funds being promised to establish a trust to purchase the building, resulted in an extraordinary general meeting on 8 October where a compromise position was agreed to. Michael Lee, Music Curator at The Powerhouse Museum, indicated that The Powerhouse could assume responsibility for a significant proportion of the collection and plant – i.e., much of the piano roll and box manufacturing machinery.

The Powerhouse will preserve this as the Mastertouch Collection, “with the intention of it becoming a working museum” and “an informative interactive website would be set up”. The collection will be housed in the Castle Hill facility of the Powerhouse. The EGM decided that MRA (Music Roll Australia) would be wound up. It is proposed a new *Friends of Mastertouch* support group will be established.

Richard Blair

NOELINE BROWN WRITES

(Our Winter Trivia Question was a 1956 photo of Noeline Brown as *Miss Marrickville Olympics* with three men. Noeline was sent a copy of the June and July newsletters and a covering letter, to which she replied.)

"Thanks for your letter and the copy of the newsletter, which I enjoyed very much. I have been in touch with Norman McVicker and he is reviewing my book for his local newspaper. Francis Charteris I saw a couple of months ago in Rockhampton while I was on tour with a play called *Wallflowering*. I suppose I should be a member of your society, as an old Stanmore identity and a former Miss Marrickville Olympics. What a hoot!"

"I still drive past my old house in [Douglas Street] Stanmore – sad to see paint peeling; wouldn't have happened in my Dad's day. In my book I talk about my brothers and my little gang in Stanmore. My older brother, Leo worked with Marrickville Council for most of his working life and, now retired, is secretary of the Actors' Benevolent Fund. My little brother, Peter went into journalism as a cub reporter at age 16 and went on to become Editor in Chief of Australian Associated Press. Peter covered the Olympics for many years in many countries. He also edited a book on horse-racing and breeding. When he retired from AAP he went to Sydney University where he completed an Arts degree."

"Jim Webster, our next door neighbour, also became a distinguished journalist and a published author, writing books about sports men and women. Gwenda Short became a nurse and a midwife and also studied to be a psychiatric nurse. That's the short story of two little houses in Stanmore, which were almost next door, but for the little lane that separated them. We are all still in touch."

Note: Of the three men in the 1956 photo, only one has been identified with certainty – Brother, later **Father Austin Kenny**, then attached to St Brigid's Church Marrickville. He subsequently moved to South Australia, where he recently died. He was known to some MHS members. The man on the left was stated in our July newsletter to be Ian Hocking, but this has since been disproved. – Editor

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We can't bemoan the loss of every house demolished, but this one, formerly in Petersham Road, opposite Marrickville Town Hall, you won't see again! (photo: Diane McCarthy)

2005 RAHS CONFERENCE

MHS was well represented at the annual conference of the Royal Australian Historical Society, held at the campus of All Saints' College, Bathurst over the weekend of 5-6 November. Lorraine Beach, Pat Mullen, Ian Rumsey, Robert Hutchinson and Angela Phippen all made the journey. Angela delivered an enlightening paper on *Women and Divorce*, a history of divorce legislation in NSW. The title doesn't convey it, but I'm sure you will guess the paper was delivered with Angela's customary wit and sparkle.

The conference program included many interesting and informative papers, along with the annual presentations of Heritage Grants and Certificates of Achievement. This annual conference is a valuable opportunity to interact with people from other societies, to gather ideas and information and share experiences. Sales of MHS publications were brisk, in particular our latest book *3 Potteries of Marrickville*, and we were delighted by the election of Robert Hutchinson to join with Angela Phippen on the RAHS Affiliated Societies Committee. Thanks to all involved for their contributions at this important event.

Lorraine Beach

Hardly a month seems to go by without one of our members having a book published, this time the first volume of a comprehensive church history: **Janice Garaty** *A Small Seed, A Stately Tree – St Peter's Parish Surry Hills: 1880-1931* (2005) is available from the parish at 9698 1948. Cost \$15 + postage. Copies will be on sale at our next meeting in February 2006.

The book has been thoroughly researched and in his foreword Fr William J Milsted notes "that parishes, by and large, do not have a keen sense of their historical identity and purpose. They do not tend to celebrate the milestones in their history nearly as well as other Catholic institutions such as schools". Here, local and social history are inextricably linked with church history. Janice is well qualified. She has been a secondary geography teacher, has a MA in Public History and is pursuing a PhD at ACU. Janice's Irish Catholic heritage was a big factor in accepting this commission.

THE WONDER OF 142,857!

Multiply this number by 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6 and it gives the same figures in the same order, beginning at a different point: but multiplied by 7, it gives all nines. Now multiply 142,857 by 8 and you get 1,142,856; add the first figure to the last six figures and get back to 142,857 again. This wondrous number has other attributes: squaring it gives 20,408,122,449. Add 20,408 to 122,449 = 142,857. According to Google it's a Kaprekar number!

SUMMER TRIVIA QUESTIONS

- Let's go to Mary's place.
- Don't be so stiff!
- Practise hospitality ungrudgingly to one another.
- I'd like to go the heaven, but if Jeffrey Archer's there, I want to go to . . .

Each is a clue to four places? What are they?
Richard pemell@tpg.com.au or 9557 2823

OUR LAST MEETING (26 November) Gregory Blaxell on Parramatta River

Gregory Blaxell has moored his yacht *Fiction* on the Parramatta River since 1980. A member of Brush Farm Historical Society, Gregory is the author of its publication *The River: Sydney Cove to Parramatta*. He inspired his audience with the extent of his knowledge about the Parramatta River and the suburbs it flows through. Beginning at the place where the river ceases to be saltwater, at the Charles Street Weir, Gregory invited us to join him on a trip downstream. The first exploration of the river was only ten days after the arrival of the First Fleet and Parramatta was established in November 1788. The following year the *Rose Hill Packet*, the first boat built in Australia, dubbed 'the Lump', was launched. Its design was based on English vessels used in shallow estuaries. Soon there were 'passage boats' owned and crewed by enterprising ticket-of-leave men. Sometimes the passengers would have to take up the oars when the crew stopped too long at the *Malting Shovel*, a tavern at the Kissing Point wharf. These boats were only 6.5 metres long and charged 1/- per person.

By the time regular ferry services were established in the 1830s, the river was the main mode of transport of goods and people, as the alternative was a rough track made dangerous by roving bushrangers. The first timetabled ferry service was provided by the *Surprise*, specially built at Neutral Bay and launched mid 1831. It displaced 25 tonnes and was fitted with a ten horse-power steam engine. Its shallow draft of 1.5 metres should have made its first trip up river a cinch. In fact it ran aground of Redbank and after a tide change finally arrived at Parramatta some 17 hours later. It was said the whole of Parramatta came down to the Queen's Wharf to see it.

We heard about the owners of ferry services, John Manning and Charles Jeanneret. Manning had started the Parramatta and River Steam Ship Company in 1844. In 1876, the manager, Jeanneret bought out Manning. Competition had arrived with the opening of the railway line from Redfern to Granville in 1855. Another factor influencing profitability was the gradual silting up of the river upstream of Homebush Bay. Jeanneret reacted by building a deepwater wharf at Redbank, where Duck Creek enters the river, and then building a steam tram line from there to Parramatta.

The Parramatta River ferries operated until 1928. They had been very popular. One ferry, the *Bronzewing* could carry more than 500 passengers. Ferries would return in 1984, with twin-hulled ships that ran up to Meadowbank. The RiverCats, introduced in 1994, have been spectacularly successful, now accounting for 25% of Sydney Ferries custom.

The wealthy always had their own boats. Sadly many of the grand estates have been demolished or have lost their curtilage. Gregory told us about one well known philanthropist, Harold Meggitt, who built his linseed oil processing plant at Looking Glass Bay and ensured that 50% of the profits were shared equally among the employees. From the factory, linseed oil was taken across the river to the Balm Paint factory opposite. Many large factories, mostly producing toxic wastes were built on the southern shore and utilised the river for transport and for disposal of wastes until the river clean-up began in the 1980s.

The river was also used for recreation, and sculling had become the supreme spectator sport around the turn of the century. Some riverside suburbs immortalise this

association - Putney, the beginning of the annual race between Oxford and Cambridge, and Mortlake, the finish line, with Henley in between. The GPS Regatta was held on the river until 1935.

Gregory revealed a past connection with the inner west - as a student of Canterbury Boys High. We hope he enjoyed revisiting these parts, as we enjoyed his infectious love of an estuary of Sydney Harbour, called the Parramatta River. In the last century houses were built backing onto the river as if it were of no interest; now we all wish we could afford a riverfront location. At least we can afford the small cost of the RiverCat!

Janice Garaty

TWO POPULAR & VALUED MEMBERS



There are few MHS activities missed by Margaret Sinclair, with her charming smile, or Ted Green, both pictured at 'Willandra', Ryde in May 2005. If Ted doesn't know the answer, he's usually got a convincing theory.
(photos: Richard Blair)

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